

**WHAT WE CLAIM IS:**

1. A method of allocating squelch identifiers in a communication network incorporating BLSR protection, the network comprising a plurality of interconnected network elements, the method comprising:
  - 5 Determining chain links between network elements;  
Setting attributes (begin, middle, end) corresponding to the chain links;  
Building chains by joining chain links together;  
Matching pairs of chains connecting network elements at the ends of chains; and  
Allocating squelch identifiers to those network elements interconnected by matching pairs of chains.
  - 10 2. A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the step of building chains comprises joining chain links having matching termination points.
  - 15 3. A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the step of matching pairs of chains comprises searching for chains interconnecting the same two network elements but pointing in opposite directions.
  4. A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein each chain link consists of a network element termination point at each end and an intermediate sub-network connection.
  5. A BLSR-protected communication network provided with squelch identifiers
- 20 by the method claimed in Claim 1.
6. A communication signal transmitted over a BLSR-protected communication network as claimed in Claim 5.
7. A carrier for an algorithm adapted to perform the squelch identifier allocation method as claimed in Claim 1.

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